

The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts

Inspection of colleges participating in the Dance and Drama Award scheme

Unique reference number: 50308

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Information about the academy

1. The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA) is a private academy training students for employment in the acting industry. The academy runs a three-year course in acting leading to the Diploma in Professional Acting and a 15 month National Advanced Certificate in Professional Acting, both awarded by Trinity College, London. The academy is accredited by the National Council for Drama Training (NCDT).
2. ALRA has two sites: ALRA North in Wigan and ALRA South in Wandsworth London. Currently 194 students are enrolled on the two courses of whom 70 (36%) are in receipt of dance and drama awards (DaDA) funded by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)

Summary report – three-year acting course

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision

Grade 2

Capacity to improve

Grade 2

Overall effectiveness

3. The Academy is a good academy and leaders demonstrate good capacity to sustain further improvement. The two co-directors communicate a clear vision to sustain ALRA's position in the sector by providing a course that successfully combines actor training for live and recorded work. The current business plan sets out very well the vision and time-bound targets for the continuing expansion of ALRA North, upgrading of facilities at both sites and extending the outreach programme to attract the most talented students.
4. At the time of the inspection 149 students were studying on the three-year National Diploma in Professional Acting of whom 60 (40%) were in receipt of DaDAs. 103 students are studying at ALRA South and there are 46 students based at ALRA North. The first cohort of third-year students graduate from ALRA North in 2013.
5. The three-year course comes together extremely well and is progressive in demands from Year 1 to Year 3. Students often choose to study at ALRA because of the inclusion of acting for camera right from Year 1, the addition of acting for radio in Year 2 and intensive modules in live and recorded performance in Year 3. Partnership work is outstanding and enriches students' experience of the arts in the wider community.

Students say they particularly enjoy opportunities to tour productions into colleges, developing their team and leadership skills.

6. Most students who begin the course complete the diploma to a good standard and the large majority secure employment within six months of graduation. Most students make good progress in lessons and good quality teaching inspires students to push themselves to reach beyond goals set in tutorials. Most lessons develop students' technical language and tutors give time for students to record reflections in their actor's working notebook. Regular use of self-criticism and peer evaluation to develop student independence is underdeveloped in some classes. Leaders have yet to scrutinise how to systematically measure students' progress from their potential judged at audition and the value that teaching adds to their achievement in each discipline. Heads of year share information about students but analysis of how to use assessment information to help all tutors move students' progress from good to outstanding is undeveloped.
7. The academy is well led and managed. Communication with staff is mostly good and tutors feel their teaching and wealth of industry expertise is highly valued by senior leaders. Students receive good quality training to ensure they leave the course with versatility, sound industry knowledge and personal resilience to sustain a career in acting.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What students like:

- teachers' professional expertise is used effectively to help students learn about current industry practices and expectations
- regular use of professional directors who introduce different rehearsal approaches
- high quality individual feedback for performance skills helping students to set realistic targets
- good quality teaching that inspires most students
- excellent partnerships with the industry, community and arts organisations offering opportunities for students to work with diverse groups of people
- the breadth of the course and the chance to perform frequently
- opportunities to shoot on location
- small size teaching groups which lead to much personalised feedback.

What students would like to see improved:

- more studio space for teaching and rehearsals at both sites
- the resource collection in the library at both sites

- limited changing room and showering facilities at ALRA South
- limited resourcing of props and costumes at ALRA North and concern that sessions for acting for radio and television are taught in the same studio with limited resources
- better working temperatures in studios at ALRA North
- better provision for healthy eating at ALRA South.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- good quality preparation in acting for recorded media
- sound professional etiquette when working with industry professionals
- students' willingness to learn from constructive criticism.

What employers would like to see improved:

- there were no recommendations from employers.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. Leadership and management of the three-year acting course are good. Effective communication throughout ALRA ensures commitment from all staff in delivering a good quality training course and in supporting leaders to continually refine the course. Leaders make judicious decisions in adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of the industry and the breadth of graduate destinations reflects this. The outstanding curriculum provision and partnership working, combined with good teaching, support students' good progress and ensure that students gain employment. These good features have been sustained since the last inspection but retention of students and a mixed picture of standards in some aspects of work are more variable than previously.
9. The academy's self-assessment identifies strengths and areas for development but the quality assurance of teaching and learning is not sufficiently robust at ALRA North or South. Leaders have not undertaken detailed scrutiny of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning either in individual lessons, by discipline nor over time. Staff development takes place often addressing subject specific needs well, but there is little emphasis on teachers sharing pedagogy to stretch every student to exceed their potential. This currently limits the impact of good summative assessment and how well all tutors use assessment data to plan lessons to raise achievement.

Outcomes for students

Grade 2

10. Most students complete the course and for the last three years the pass rate for those who complete the course is 100%. Recent reports by Trinity College show that standards of performance in third-year work are generally good against a national standard for the diploma award. Students are often deemed highly competent in their vocal work with excellent accents, good range and confidence in ensemble work. Standards attained in realising characters and in sustaining believable truthful interpretations are more variable. Actors achieve good physicality, movement range and stamina but some are less secure with using their bodies to capture emotions integral to their role. Despite a good quality in most performance work, reports by Trinity College raise concerns about some poor tutoring of written work and weak presentation of written work in the final year.
11. Retention of students in recent years is variable. Withdrawals have risen since 2008 and increasingly students withdraw to pursue other careers. Leaders have reviewed why a higher proportion of first-year students are leaving the course and as a result now include taster days in the summer for all students who accept their place. Students say this gives them time at ALRA to experience a typical day of training; this is bearing fruit with only one first-year withdrawal this year compared to nine in the previous two years. Students who defer for financial or health reasons are effectively integrated back into the course and succeed.
12. Students enjoy their course and choose to study at ALRA because of the focus on actor training for recorded media, positive experiences at auditions and the small inclusive community of ALRA. Students are highly complimentary about the intensive audition process because it pays careful attention to individual potential. Students are pleased that fellow auditionees who are rejected also receive constructive feedback from co-directors.
13. Students want to meet expectations for high levels of attendance and punctuality because they enjoy their course. Attendance is consistently above 95%. Students understand that lateness is not accepted by tutors or by the industry. They know that attitudes and behaviours developed in training will prepare them well for future careers. During the inspection, students arrived well in time for a whole company physical and vocal warm up class, successfully led by two third-year students. Students receive good preparation for future employment through contextual studies sessions. A few students who are less confident with interview preparation do not receive sufficient tutoring for writing letters to agents and designing their curriculum vitae.
14. The academy produces good actors who sustain regular work in the industry. On average over the last three years the large majority of

students secure employment within six months of graduation. Even so, data show much fluctuation ranging from 92% in 2008, 65% in 2009 and 81% in 2011. Leaders' summary of graduate destinations with a breakdown of the percentage entering live or recorded work is good, showing an increasing percentage entering acting work for television. Recent successes include graduates in *Holby City*, *Peak Practice*, *Hollyoaks* and *Eastenders*. The missing link, in using destinations data as part of self-assessment to evaluate the impact of the training course, is a detailed evaluation of alumni information to exemplify rising career profiles, and conversely why students do not remain in the industry.

15. Students learn a good range of techniques for warming up and cooling down. Most recognise that complementary fitness training and healthy eating are a prerequisite for sustaining stamina and strength. Students' written work does not always do justice to the knowledge they acquire through practice, with limited critical review of how they optimise their physical performance as actors. Students at ALRA South find the option to eat at the local food bar expensive and other local food options limiting in trying to sustain healthy eating.
16. Students receive good guidance about staying safe when travelling and excellent guidance about e-safety. They have good insight about how inappropriate use of social networking sites affects their internet profile and future career prospects. Through student representatives and year group tutorials students share their views about their training. Leaders respond well to concerns and have on several occasions changed the timetable or tutors to better support students' learning.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

17. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is characterised by good questioning to check students' understanding, challenging pace, good energy and often good attention to rigour in technique, especially in vocal studies at ALRA South. In outstanding vocal lessons tutors check students' anatomical knowledge effectively through questioning and listening intently to vocal warm up. Students are stretched to acquire demanding technical skills and make excellent progress with articulation and projection. The learning activities successfully accommodate different levels of ability and by using peer feedback students apply constructive comments to improve their performance. In these lessons students with learning needs are well catered for with differently coloured handouts to support reading. This excellence is not consistent in teaching observed by inspectors at both sites. At ALRA North teachers own accompaniment is too loud and limits how well students can hear each other. There is inconsistency in tutors' use of words of songs given as handouts or giving students musical scores to work from; these would be better suited to preparing for auditions.

18. In most acting classes good attention is paid to posture, vocal control and students' interpretative ability in finding their way through a scene. In movement classes students' progress is more variable because of a lack of individual correction for accuracy as well as style. A small minority of students want lessons to include more discussion and greater independence, and a few want more opportunity to sing unaccompanied to develop their confidence in acappella work.
19. The good range of summative assessments such as studio, theatre and recorded performances, the actors' working notebooks and continuous practical projects are well planned, giving scope to students to present their achievement in different ways. The transparency of summative assessment criteria in course handbooks helps students know how well they are achieving and they say assessments are fair. The twice-yearly formal assessment points lead to successful individual tutorials, guiding students in judging their key strengths and goals for improvement.
20. The provision for students is outstanding. The curriculum is well integrated in providing professional training for actors for radio, film, television and theatre. Students benefit from clear module outlines with progressive learning outcomes and good detail about assessment. The continual emphasis on rehearsal and performance opportunity, through the module 'building performance' and the touring of a Shakespeare production in Year 2, are highly valued by students. In response to an external review of teaching in 2010, leaders developed greater breadth and relevance to the movement studies curricula. Students do not receive enough detailed guidance in drawing together and evaluating evidence for final year written work. A few students are over-reliant on internet sources which are not carefully considered or combined with the student's own critical writing.
21. Leaders have sustained and further developed excellent links with industry experts, community groups and colleges. Casting directors and expert practitioners regularly lead guest workshops, take part as panel members in mock auditions and frequently direct curriculum projects. In the third year student's relish performing in three plays, touring their work and working with professional directors for assessments in television presenting, a radio drama and performing a short television drama.
22. Pastoral support and guidance are good. Students feel confident to seek advice about finance, their nutrition and accommodation. Tutors use their industry connections to refer students to medical experts and ensure students receive appropriate treatment to sustain their training. Some students wish for sprung floors to better support their body in movement studies work. Targeted support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is improving. The use of external tutors is helping students with specific literacy needs. Tutoring of students to help them acquire skills in evaluative writing and ability to critique evidence

for professional development portfolios is not sufficiently regular or detailed.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

23. Leadership and management are good and leaders regularly consult with staff through department meetings. In devising the new business plan leaders worked effectively through two days of meetings with staff and an external conference with the board of trustees, giving everyone a voice in shaping the next five years of development. Most staff say leaders listen to their feedback and both permanent and sessional tutors feel informed about course matters through regular email communication. Arrangements to keep students safe are good. Clear policies are in place for staff and students to understand health and safety requirements in studios and filming on location.
24. The cycle of course evaluation takes good account of staff and student views and includes clear rationale for changes to the curriculum. Limited evaluative documentary evidence about the review of each discipline strand by middle leaders does not do justice to good discussion and decision making taking place at department meetings. The course evaluation and action plan do not provide incisive assessment of students' progress or analysis of outcomes over time.
25. Leaders have addressed the need for all teachers to have formally recognised teaching qualifications and this has improved through good links with a local training college. Despite this, staff with teaching qualifications are not used well enough in modelling best practice for other tutors. Staff share much practice informally and find the open door policy to watch each other useful. This is not coordinated to help staff meet their appraisal targets by observing those who excel in particular aspects of teaching.
26. At ALRA South tutors comment positively about feedback from lesson observations. The majority of observation forms include tips for teachers but too many observations are focused on the process of teaching rather than the impact on learning. There has been no standardisation by leaders to jointly determine what characterises good or better teaching and learning. The self-assessed grading of teaching as outstanding is not underpinned by evidence showing how leaders arrive at this judgement by reflecting on outcomes for students, students' progress or criteria in grading lessons. An urgent priority at both sites is to establish routine observations of teaching to benchmark quality and determine a programme of regular professional development in teaching to support all tutors. Leaders have been slow to respond to the point for consideration from the last inspection and have not recognised the importance given to the quality assurance of teaching in the current inspection cycle of dance and drama colleges.

27. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Outcomes for students are good, showing no differential by ethnicity, gender or by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Achievement and destinations by student groups are not documented in the self-assessment report. Student handbooks include good guidance about reporting incidents of discrimination or harassment, which are very rare. Students are treated fairly and feel there is a good community spirit amongst ALRA students. Leaders are proactive in working to attract more students from under-represented groups and in particular attracting more Asian students to acting careers through outreach work. ALRA's Yellow Academy summer school is successful in recruiting East Asian students to a week of acting training, an excellent response to the partnership work with Yellow Earth touring theatre company, working to raise the profile of British East Asian theatre.
28. The academy has invested in new information and communications technology and leaders are working hard to secure new premises for ALRA North in partnership with the local authority. The academy provides good value for money.

What does The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen middle leadership capacity at both ARLA North and South to make certain that the student experience at both sites is of an equally high quality and that all teaching staff receive high levels of support for their teaching.
- Include as part of self-assessment a rigorous evaluation of the quality of learning and teaching over time and the impact on student achievement.
- Establish a robust cycle of lesson observations which ensures that all senior and middle leaders understand and use a common set of criteria to benchmark quality. Enable all leaders to use evidence from observations to plan staff development and training.
- Enable all tutors to plan high quality lessons and to know how to vary teaching methods to set differentiated work to stretch the very talented students and support students with specific learning needs.
- Improve the evaluation of graduate career progression by using more in-depth longitudinal studies to capture and analyse alumni information.

Record of main findings			
Provider name	The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts	Inspection number	367171
Learning types: 18+ plus learner responsive: FE Full time courses			

Diploma in Professional Acting

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall
Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection Full-time learners.	149
Overall effectiveness	2
Capacity to improve	2
Outcomes for learners	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2
How well do learners progress?	2
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2
How safe do learners feel?	2
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	NA*
Quality of provision	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2
Leadership and management	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	NA*
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2

*where applicable to the type of provision

Summary report – certificate in acting

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision

Grade 2

Capacity to improve

Grade 2

Overall effectiveness

29. The Academy is a good academy and leaders demonstrate good capacity to sustain further improvement. The co-directors communicate a clear vision to further develop ALRA's 15 month certificate course by ensuring that the training for the National Advanced Certificate in Professional Acting secures a higher profile in the market place and attracts a diverse student population.
30. Since the last inspection the co-directors and the newly appointed head of postgraduate studies, who leads the certificate course, have reviewed the module structure and given greater breadth to the course. The training is well designed to push students quickly through an intensive 15 month course. Students often choose to study this course at ALRA because of the integration of acting for recorded media as well as acting for live performance work and much opportunity to perform regularly. Partnership work for the certificate course is good and ensures that students have plenty of opportunities to work with professional directors.
31. At the time of the inspection 25 postgraduate students were studying on the Certificate in Professional Acting of whom 10 (22%) are in receipt of DaDAs. 32 students are enrolled at ALRA South and 13 students at ALRA North. Most students who begin the course complete the certificate to a good standard and the large majority secure employment within six months of graduation. Most students make good progress in lessons and good quality teaching inspires students to develop their critical engagement with practice, often challenging them to learn in ways different from their previous acting training. Students work cooperatively and recognise that small student numbers benefit good relations between staff and students.
32. Most lessons develop students' technical language and tutors give time for students to record reflections in their actor's working notebook. Teaching uses targeted feedback to help students know how to improve their work. Regular use of self-criticism and peer evaluation is underdeveloped in some classes. As with the diploma course, leaders have yet to scrutinise how to systematically measure students' progress

from potential judged at audition and the value that teaching adds to their achievement in each of the four core strands of the course.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What students like:

- good trust between students and tutors helping students feel confident in taking creative risks
- the emphasis placed upon the explorative processes early in the course
- regular use of professional directors who introduce different rehearsal approaches, making sure students can adapt to stylistic as well as methodological differences
- high quality individual feedback helping students set realistic targets
- good quality teaching that inspires most students
- small size teaching groups with regular personalised feedback.

What students would like to see improved:

- the balance of the curriculum to give more time for acting for recorded media
- the planning and coordination of the intensive workshop weeks so that students have more than one workshop each day
- greater opportunity for ALRA South and ALRA North students to meet and share their experiences about the course
- more studio space for teaching and rehearsals at both sites
- more extensive resource collection in the libraries at both sites
- limited changing room and showering facilities at ALRA South
- limited resourcing of props and costumes at ALRA North and concern that sessions for acting for radio and television are taught in the same studio with limited resources
- better working temperatures in studios at ALRA North.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- good quality preparation in acting for recorded media
- sound professional etiquette when working with industry professionals
- students' willingness to learn from constructive criticism.

What employers would like to see improved:

- there were no recommendations from employers.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

33. Leadership and management of the certificate course are good. The recent appointment of a head of the postgraduate certificate course has strengthened the senior leadership team, improving communication between both sites at senior leadership level. Leaders make judicious decisions in adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of the industry. The good curriculum provision, partnership work, and good teaching support students' good progress.
34. The academy's self-assessment identifies strengths and areas for development but the quality assurance of teaching and learning is not sufficiently robust at ALRA North or South. Leaders have not undertaken detailed scrutiny of the quality of teaching and its impact on students learning either in individual lessons, by discipline or over time. Staff development takes place often, addressing subject specific development very well, but there is little emphasis on teachers sharing pedagogy to stretch every student to exceed their potential judged at audition.

Outcomes for students

Grade 2

35. Most students complete the course and for the last three years the pass for those who complete the course is 100%. Recent reports by Trinity College show that standards of performance in the certificate course are good. Students attain well in choral singing, have good clarity in speech work with some excellent accent work, and often achieve good overall company performances with sustained mood and characters. Students have good physicality and some are judged to attain very good standards in solo work. When a few students achieve an outstanding level of performance, the unity of vocal, acting and movement work is powerfully displayed through confidence and depth of research to inform their performance.
36. Most students on the course say they enjoy their training and choose to study at ALRA because of the focus on actor training for recorded media, positive experiences at interview and audition and the small inclusive community of ALRA. Retention of students on the certificate course remains above 85%. Withdrawals are rare and often for financial reasons. All students who accept their place attend taster days in the summer to experience a typical day of training at ALRA.

37. Students want to meet expectations for high levels of attendance and punctuality because they enjoy their course. Students understand that lateness is not accepted by tutors or by the industry. They know that attitudes and behaviours developed in training will prepare them well for future careers. During the inspection, students arrived well in time for a whole company physical and vocal warm up class, successfully led by two third-year students. Students receive good preparation for future employment through contextual studies.
38. The academy produces good actors who sustain regular work in the industry. On average over the last three years 80% of students from the certificate course secure employment within six months of graduation. Leaders' summary of graduate destinations, with a breakdown of the percentage entering live or recorded work, is good, and shows that for the certificate course since 2008 there has been almost an equal division of students entering careers in live theatre work and recorded work for television and film. In collating destinations data the category of 'other' is not analysed in sufficient depth to show how many graduates progress to set up their own companies or pursue work other than in acting. The missing link, in using destinations data as part of self-assessment to evaluate the impact of the training course, is a detailed evaluation of alumni information to exemplify rising career profiles, and conversely why students do not remain in the industry.
39. Students confirm that they quickly learn good techniques for warming up and cooling down of the body and voice. The inclusion of speech lab and body lab in the training gives additional support to those who need it. Students receive good guidance about fitness and nutrition to support their well-being.
40. Students receive good guidance about staying safe when travelling and excellent guidance about e-safety. They have good insight about how inappropriate use of social networking sites affects their internet profile and future career prospects. Through student representatives and year group tutorials students share their views about their training.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

41. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is characterised by good questioning to check students' understanding, challenging pace, good energy and often good attention to rigour in technique, especially in vocal studies at ALRA South. In an outstanding performance project class focusing on *The Seagull* by Chekhov, students made excellent progress because the tutor sustained a challenging pace for learning, frequently used peer evaluation to encourage constructive criticism and was highly sensitive to the emotional and physical needs of students in demanding improvisation work. Students displayed solid knowledge of the text and were willing to take risks with their own expectations

because tutoring carefully accommodated their different levels of ability and confidence. In a good movement studies lesson students made good progress in exploring different dynamic qualities derived from Laban's effort theory. Good reference was made to a key text but students' ability to record the technical terms was hampered by the absence of a handout or resource to guide students' note taking.

42. Good lessons combine theory and practical application very well and include creative opportunity through improvisation tasks. In some classes an over-reliance on teacher-led learning means that opportunities for setting work at a different pace, by ability groups and through demanding extension tasks, is not always catered for in planning or teaching.
43. The certificate course includes a good range of summative assessments such as studio, theatre and recorded performances, many written assignments, a seminar presentation and continuous performance projects. Most students enjoy the emphasis upon research skills and reading, recognising that this influences their understanding and application of core techniques in practical work. They wish for more copies of key texts to be available in the libraries. The moderation of assessments through dual marking ensures parity and good standardisation. Through two personalised tutorials each term students receive clear feedback about their key strengths and targets for improvement.
44. The curriculum for the certificate course is good. It provides a good synergy between the four core modules of acting and performance studies, voice and movement studies, contextual studies and practical research projects. The course handbook includes clear module outlines and bibliographies to support the breadth and depth expected for the course. As a result of 13 formal presentations, a local tour of a production, performing in the professional showcase in a West End theatre and creating and performing in film projects, students are challenged to quickly acquire high levels of performing skills suitable for professional careers in live theatre or recording work.
45. Most students are pleased with the balance of the timetable but there are mixed views about the value of six hours a week devoted to self-directed study. Students are concerned with the planning and coordination of the intensive workshops weeks and express disappointment that this year there was only one workshop each day of the week. Students are concerned this affects travel costs and does not give the intense experience expected of working with many guest practitioners in a workshop week.
46. Leaders have sustained and further developed excellent links with industry experts, community groups and colleges. Casting directors and expert practitioners regularly lead guest workshops, take part as panel

members in mock auditions and frequently direct shows as part of curriculum projects. The collaboration with Tara Arts since July 2011 enables students each year to work with a professional theatre company, performing a short play that tours to schools in the South East region.

47. Pastoral support and guidance are good. As postgraduate students they feel their voice is well listened to and they are confident in raising issues about their course. ALRA offers the free service of a qualified counsellor and ensures that students in need of specific medical advice are referred to voice experts or the onsite private physiotherapist who operates reduced rates for students. Targeted support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is improving and steadily staff are becoming more familiar with using specific learning resources to help students with dyslexia.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

48. Leadership and management of the certificate course are good and leaders regularly consult with staff through department meetings. Recently a new head of the postgraduate certificate course has been appointed and this role has strengthened the senior leadership by giving greater capacity for the three senior leaders to divide their leadership and teaching time between ALRA South and ALRA North. Tutors on the certificate course feel consulted and part of a well-managed team.
49. The cycle of course evaluation takes good account of staff and student views and includes clear rationale for changes to the curriculum. Staff teams meet regularly and there is evidence that meetings review students' progress often on an individual basis. The course evaluation and action plan do not provide incisive assessment of students' progress by cohorts or a detailed review of achievement in each of the five course strands. This limits the potential insight about how well the quality of teaching influences achievement in each of the modules.
50. Leaders have addressed the need for all teachers to have formally recognised teaching qualifications and this has improved through good links with a local training college. Despite this, staff with teaching qualifications are not used well enough in modelling best practice for other tutors. Staff share much practice informally and find the open door policy to watch each other useful. This is not coordinated to help staff meet their appraisal targets by observing those who excel in particular aspects of teaching.
51. At ALRA South tutors comment positively about feedback from lesson observations. The majority of observation forms include tips for teachers but too many observations are focused on the process of teaching rather than the impact on learning. There has been no standardisation by leaders to jointly determine what characterises good or better teaching

and learning. The self-assessed grading of teaching as outstanding is not underpinned by evidence showing how leaders arrive at this judgement by reflecting on outcomes for students, students' progress or criteria in grading lessons. An urgent priority at both sites is to establish routine observations of teaching to benchmark quality and determine a programme of regular professional development to support all tutors.

52. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Outcomes for students are good, showing no differential by ethnicity, gender or by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Recruitment of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is often higher for the certificate course than for the diploma, ranging from 24% of students on the course this year to 16% in the 2010 cohort. Achievement and destinations by student groups for the certificate course are not documented in the self-assessment report.
53. Arrangements to keep students safe are good. Clear policies are in place for staff and students to understand health and safety requirements in studios and filming on location. Students receive good guidance about safe practice when touring shows to schools and colleges. This gives students good knowledge of areas such as risk assessment work and informs their work in the timetabled professional preparation classes.
54. The academy has invested in new equipment such as television cameras and editing equipment for show reels and radio work. Leaders are working hard to secure new premises for ALRA North through partnership with the local authority to give ALRA North an increase from five to ten studios and two new television recording studios. The academy provides good value for money.

What does The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen middle leadership capacity at both ARLA North and South to make certain that the student experience at both sites is of an equally high quality and that all teaching staff receive high levels of support for their teaching.
- Include as part of self-assessment a rigorous evaluation of the quality of learning and teaching over time and the impact on student achievement.
- Establish a robust cycle of lesson observations which ensures that all senior and middle leaders understand and use a common set of criteria to benchmark quality. Enable all leaders to use evidence from observations to plan staff development and training.
- Enable all tutors to plan high quality lessons and to know how to vary teaching methods to set differentiated work to stretch the very talented students and support students with specific learning needs.

- Improve the evaluation of graduate career progression by using more in-depth longitudinal studies to capture and analyse alumni information.

Record of main findings			
Provider name	The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts	Inspection number	367171
Learning types: 18+ plus learner responsive: FE Full time courses			

Certificate in Professional Acting

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall
Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection Full-time learners.	25
Overall effectiveness	2
Capacity to improve	2
Outcomes for learners	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2
How well do learners progress?	2
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2
How safe do learners feel?	2
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	NA*
Quality of provision	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2
Leadership and management	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	NA*
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2

*where applicable to the type of provision

Information about the inspection

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by a co-director and the head of postgraduate study as nominees, carried out the inspection. The additional inspector visited both ALRA South and ALRA North as part of the inspection. Inspectors took account of data about students' achievement since the previous inspection, the academy's self-assessment report and action plan, and comments from the qualification awarding body, Trinity College, London.

Inspectors observed lessons and both inspectors conducted several joint observations. Inspectors met with groups of students from both courses at ALRA South and ALRA North to gain their views. The lead inspector also met with staff in leadership roles and a group of teachers. Inspectors considered the views of employers and views expressed in recent student feedback questionnaires.

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